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SIPDIS

ISN/RA FOR JDANIEL AND RNEPHEW

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SUBJECT: FRANCE SUPPORTS MIDDLE EAST CONSENSUS RESOLUTION
AT IAEA

REF: STATE 85128

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Young for Reasons 1.4(b), (d)

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¶1. (C) During an August 25 meeting, IAEA desk officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Disarmament and Non-proliferation Department Francois Revardeaux said France was in full agreement on the need to return to consensus on Middle East issues at the IAEA, both for the sake of the important work to be done there, and to avoid poisoning the atmosphere prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Consequently, France is strongly in support of creating a new, single consensus resolution. Revardeaux had no specific ideas for language for a consensus resolution, but expressed his hope that the GC President's current efforts would bear fruit. However, he cautioned Egypt had not given any signs that it will be willing to show flexibility. On the contrary, as Egypt seems to want to use the IAEA as a diplomatic launch pad for similar initiatives at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, there is likely very little motivation for them to negotiate at the IAEA.

¶2. (C) Revardeaux said that since the Egyptians have not yet presented their resolution, it is difficult to speak concretely about a "Plan B." However - with the strong proviso that he was speaking purely hypothetically - Revardeaux suggested two possible scenarios: in the event (which Revardeaux admitted was highly unlikely) that the Egyptian resolution is largely acceptable, it may be worth agreeing to the entire draft in exchange for an Egyptian commitment to hold the Arab League as a whole to an informal consensus. Another possibility is that a Presidency Statement acknowledging some of Egypt's more controversial draft elements would give Egypt the diplomatic and public relations victory it seeks while keeping any resolution to more widely acceptable language and allowing a quiet return to consensus.

¶3. (C) In a separate August 20 meeting, MFA NEA DAS-equivalent Ludovic Pouille confirmed France agreed in principle with the U.S. approach to the Middle East issue at the IAEA. According to Pouille, France and UK have been consulting closely and will work for EU consensus. However, he said he doubted whether maintaining EU unity will be possible, and added that Egypt has delivered very strong demarches throughout Europe over last several years on this issue. He expected that the issue will be discussed further at the August 26 French ambassadors' conference in Paris.

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